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BOOKS IN BRIEF

Gehlen—Spy of the Century
By E. H. Cookridge

Random House, 402 pp., \$10

HATE-LOVE OF SPOOKERY

WALTER DARNELL JACOBS

Our age does not know just how to assess the professional spy. He is somehow outside the broader circles of gentlemen. He is worthy of respect for his skills and valor but worthy of disdain for the unsavoriness of his calling. He is a source of popular entertainment so long as he is presented in the most shallow and unreal parody. We know we need him but most of us wish that we didn't.

Cookridge's assessment of Reinhard Gehlen is subject to all these conflicts. Cookridge, himself a person with some professional spookery in his background, sees in Gehlen the outstanding spy of this century. He recognizes all the skills that Gehlen possesses and marvels at all (well, nearly all) of the exploits that Gehlen brought off. Still, Cookridge writes about his subject with an animus which has scarcely been equalled since Trotsky wrote Stalin's biography or Gore Vidal described a night with Richard Nixon.

GEHLEN HAS BEEN a director in espionage and intelligence rather than an operator or agent. He has served Hitler, Truman, Eisenhower, Adenauer, Erhard and Kiesinger. He provided Hitler with accurate combat and political intelligence on the USSR during World War II. He then served the United States from his base in the Pullacher Forst, collecting information inside the Soviet bloc when most Western agencies were unable either to penetrate or maintain sources there. When the Federal Republic was created, Gehlen became head of the West German Intelligence Service (BND) and created a worldwide system for Bonn that was also used to some extent by the United States and NATO. Before his retirement in 1968 Gehlen warned that the Soviet Union was eager for an excuse to use force against Czechoslovakia—

but nobody listened.

This series of accomplishments is fittingly admired by Cookridge. He admires, too, Gehlen's ability to work with the Egyptian apparatus and, at almost the same time, to cooperate with the Israelis. He even has some grudging appreciation for Gehlen's operations in France against the Algerian separatists before 1958.

What generates Cookridge's hate-love of Gehlen is something other than a squeamishness at Gehlen's ability to switch sides (Hitler to CIA to Bonn) or to serve both sides (Israel and Egypt). In Cookridge's code the professional spy is expected to be prepared to serve whomever he must in the style of the good British civil servant who can serve Lab or Lib or Tory and do the same competent professional job.

No, the cause of Cookridge's dislike of Gehlen is the fact that the great German spy has lived a life marked by a single-minded application to and entrancement by the Soviet Union. Whether Gehlen found his "subject" in the Soviet Union, as Cookridge asserts, or deduced from study and observation that the USSR was at the center of twentieth-century affairs, as events would seem to argue, is a question for speculation only. Gehlen became the "spy of the century" because he was able to supply more essential elements of information about the USSR than any of his contemporaries.

"Spy of the century" or not, Gehlen remains a most controversial figure even in retirement. The value of Cookridge's work is to take that controversy out of the pages of the sensationalist and reflex liberal press of Germany and the United States and place it almost inside the arena of scholarly research. He makes a reasonable attempt at meeting the standards of respectable research but is handicapped, not only by his feelings of aversion toward Gehlen the person but also by the nature of available sources, which are not entirely those of the political historian, but are, rather, concealed and often dissembled. And even though Cookridge places too much reliance on secondary sources and some questionable polemics (e.g., Wise and Ross), he produces a work that advances knowledge about espionage in general and about the great one, Gehlen.

Still, it is far from a definitive study. Because of the nature of the subject, that study will probably never be produced. Cookridge, however, sees the main lacuna in his attempt at compre-

hensiveness—the role of the Gehlen papers. We now have the Gehlen autobiography in German and it is soon to appear in an expanded English version. Cookridge ridicules the German edition as self-serving and lacking in documentation. He fails to find therein promised sensational disclosures about the Bormann matter. The Gehlen papers, nevertheless, deserve more weight than Cookridge is willing to assign them. Gehlen's version, in either language edition, is perforce a major input in any understanding of Gehlen the spy and Gehlen the man.

Cookridge's is an outstanding effort to contribute to the understanding of Gehlen as a director of espionage. It is pettiness perhaps to have expected more of a contribution to an understanding of Gehlen as a man—or as an imperial friend who has told us so much about the nature and capabilities of the Soviet Union. □

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